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What Should Be the Role of Afroamerican Education in the Undergraduate Curriculum?

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Current undergraduate curricula seem alien to black students, many of whom come from disadvantaged environments in the US and do not identify with courses applicable to a white societal structure. Unfortunately, many US history books have either glossed over or omitted the many contributions of black citizens to society with which black students could positively identify themselves. Protesting students claim that the textbooks have concealed the real image of their forefathers and seek education that is historically, culturally, socially and politically relevant to them. In order to meet educational as well as psychological needs of black students, two basic phases are suggested for Afroamerican studies: (1) courses in black history and culture, including African languages, that stimulate ethnic awareness and pride, and (2) courses offering realistic approaches to current problems, motivating student commitment to the improvement of conditions in their communities. From the outset, curricula should provide opportunities for involvement in community work so that students may gain first-hand experience while being trained. Their presence would also provide the much-needed role models for youths within slums and ghettos. Emphasis is placed on instruction by black professors, who can better understand and relate to black students, for it is felt that white professors - though well-meaning - would be instinctively repelled by students searching for self-identity. A list of 18 goals of Afroamerican education is appended. (WM)

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NATHAN HARE - BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Thirty-four-year-old Nathan Hare began life on a sharecropper's farm near Slick, Oklahoma and got his early education there. Then came four years at Oklahoma's Langston University--an all-Negro college in an all-Negro town--where he was both a "scholar of the year" and a Golden Gloves champion.

After acquiring the Ph.D. in sociology, on fellowship, from the University of Chicago, he taught for six years at predominantly Negro Howard University before being fired without warning in late June of 1967, for advocating that Howard become a black university. The American Civil Liberties Union is handling that case.

He returned briefly to professional boxing--a career conducted four years earlier under an assumed name had been cut short by Howard deans.

In February, he came to San Francisco State College to head the black studies program. He is a member of the Advisory Council of the National Conference on Black Power, chaired last summer's workshop on education there, and was once chairman of the Washington (D.C.) Committee for Black Power and president of Howard's chapter of the American Association of University Professors.

He has written more than forty articles in publications which include the Saturday Review, The Times of London, Negro Digest, Social Forces, Liberator, and American Sociological Review. He is author of a book, The Black Anglo Saxons, which is soon to enter its second printing by the newly formed Floyd McKissick publishing company. His biographies appear, or are scheduled to appear in six volumes, including, Who's Who in American Education and The Dictionary of International Biographies.

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WHAT SHOULD BE THE ROLE OF AFROAMERICAN EDUCATION IN THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM?

To solve the problems of the Black race, Afroamerican education must produce persons capable of solving the problems of a contagious American society.

To solve the problems of American society, Afroamericans must first black-wash--revamp--the existing educational system and revolutionize America's youth--black, yellow, brown and white.

A black education which is not revolutionary in the current day is both irrelevant and useless. To remain impartial in the educational arena is to allow the current partiality to whiteness to fester. Black education must be based on both idealogical and pedagogical blackness.

To implement a relevant black education we must overthrow and eliminate the bulk of current college and school officials who are unable to move with tidal change and shift the traditional gears of business-as-usual complex.

The racism rampant in America's schools, white and Negro, must be blacked out.

On the positive plane, Afroamerican education must activate and energize the black intelligentsia toward giving greater direction to the people of the black nation.

Toward this end, black youths must be prepared for power in both community and nation--the present predicament and sense of powerlessness must be eradicated--and infused with ethnic confidence and a spirit of self-assertion. This will

enable them to regenerate and reconstruct their own black communities, break the deadly grip of poverty, and build a productive black future. Not only does the current educational system fail to achieve those things; it viciously operates as an obstacle to black fulfillment and the elevation of blackness--which is why it must be eradicated.

In the beginning American education, particularly on the college level, was highly private, restricted to the few who were wealthy enough to afford it. Such persons, as social theorists Thorsten Veblen observed in his book, The Theory of the Leisure Class, were characterized by a peculiar mentality in which, owing to the necessity for displaying one's wealth, it was prestigious to be free from productive endeavor. Any work done could not be remunerative and preferably should be of no significant use to anybody, let alone oneself; to waste time and have the time to waste time was the symbol of prestige. Their educational enterprise accordingly was characterized by a "liberal arts" approach where students learned a little about a lot of things and a lot about nothing. The leisure-class syndrome and its snobbish motivations developed a preoccupation with lofty gobbledygook and paraphernalia such as footnoting. Students might be compelled to labor in memorizing the idiomatic expressions and the verb conjugations of dead languages; or, more currently, languages which invariably fade from the student's memory and, while remembered, are useless in post-college life.

As middle class aspirants began to emulate the leisure class, and education was largely socialized, the principle of exclusiveness was reinforced by the need to stem the flood of recruits to professional occupations. Hence, comprehensive exam or the language test, or pass all academic re-

quirements only to fail the bar exam because of political beliefs or color of skin. Education lost much of its capacity for vitalizing the mind and, since the end-products became more important than the process, eventually amounting to a routine assimilation of approved bodies of knowledge, a process which fails to inspire a black child of working class origin.

I sometimes shock students into a realization of the shallowness of the American college scene by walking into a classroom and throwing out a concept, preferably with a German-sounding name, such as "zeitschaft" (whether this is a word, I do not know) which I might claim to be a concept for a societal condition in which there is widespread feeling of normlessness. While students are busy copying down the term, I proceed to show how to measure the intensity of the zeitschaft predicament. This is accomplished, I further instruct, by computing a Index of Facial Response. An Index of Facial Response (by now I am calling it the IFR score) is computed by:(1) observing a sample of persons over a period of time, passing or encountering one another on a given street corner during a given day; (2) charting the number of smiles exhibited by the individuals comprising the sample; then (4) dividing this by the square root of two. While the students are furiously engaged in copying this down, virtually slobbering in anticipation of returning to their dormitories where they will ambivalently complain of the difficulty of the course (perhaps requesting their roommate's aid in calling out the material from memory), I step back and explain my desire to have the students see the board clearly, inasmuch as I had made it all up. I further state that I knew that they did not understand it (no more than I had) and that they are

not being educated, inspite of what they are accustomed to believe, by merely memorizing a professor's fodder and regurgitating it on his test.

White students, it is true, are victims of the same condition, but it is doubly alien to the experience of black students who, moreover, are burdened by many another unconscious assumptions of white supremacy. Take the matter of the cultural imperialism which white ethnocentrism produces. A white anthropology professor may think nothing of dividing African tribes into "primitive" and "westernized," then point out that primitive tribes are more characterized by the matrilineal system (tracing ancestry through the mother instead of the father) while neglecting to point out that this could be a more accurate procedure. The black student who first called my attention to this fact indicated that "you have to take the mother's word for it and sometimes she doesn't know herself." He swore that a boy in his Georgia bayou community came home one day and told his father happily that he was going to marry a girl--let us call her Pearlie Mae. His father said: "Son, I didn't know that would go that far; you can't marry Pearlie Mae; that's my daughter; she's your sister; don't tell your mamma, now." The boy moped around then broke down and told his mother what was wrong. "That's okay," his mother consoled, "you can marry Pearlie Mae. Don't tell your daddy but he ain't your father."

Sociology classes will discuss the merits of the Moniyhan Report on the Negro Family, incognizant of the implications of Moniyhan's own figures showing, for example, that for every one hundred nonwhite males between ages 25 and 40 in New York City, there are thirty-three extra females. Somebody of necessity, must carry a greater sexual burden than rightfully is his share, or a number of women will languish via induced celibacy. At the same

time, the condition is being intensified by the disproportionate rates at which black males are dying in the Vietnam encounter, depleting the relative supply of eligible black males a few years hence. This cold demographic fact will lead to family disorganization and high rates of adultery, no matter how "moral" or "stable" (as social scientists say) black sexual codes might be.

Similarly, anthropology professors will subject black students to discussions on the family disorganization among Africans in Kenya, for example, impervious to the fact that much of family strife is a product of the Christian missionaries' importation of an alien monogamy which, replacing the existing polygamy evidently geared to the demography and socioeconomic needs of the people, displaced surplus wives (in order to "save" them) and produced a good deal of family disorganization which anthropologiests get grants and trips abroad to "study."

Courses in European history will skip over the slave trade while courses in American history will mention black persons only with reference to slavery and the myth that Lincoln's restricted Emancipation Proclamation freed all of them. Courses and textbooks in literature remain lily white. Many white students, spurred by involvement in civil rights activities and the daily prominence of the black struggle in news coverage, are growing keenly aware of these curious omissions, but it is ever so much more painful when the student is black.

And yet they know so well that they must wade somehow through this "white" <u>milieu</u> in search of ratification for the "white rat race" (which is a chore for anybody). The chore is simply compounded by the fact that, psychologically and otherwise, it does not relate so well to what is crucial

to the black student's life, inclining him in too many cases to be motivated to give up. He eventually comes to see it as essentially "a bad set."

This sense of defeatism and despair is reinforced and magnified by the models of failure surrounding him in the black community. On top of that, exposure to harsh measures of discrimination, past or present, provoke a feeling of suspicion out of which can develop a negative definition of certain phenomena which the white middle class employs for social acceptance, including not only cultural symbols of status; it might become derogatory, for example, to be seen spending much time with books. Under the prevailing college system, structured so that an individual succeeds best by conforming most to middle class values, black students labor considerably less prepared (than white students of suburban training and experience) to cope. They grow naturally and indelibly alienated... It might become more "in" to be pretty good at cards, for example, which only multiplies the probability of failure in the academic arena. The black student--covertly at first--rightfully begins to question the nature of standards impassionately dangled above his head as obstacles to the acquisition of the stamp "qualified."

I spoke recently at Yale University, where I had the occasion to ponder the blank and (in a good many cases) open-mouthed stares of ignorance on faces in the predominantly white audience when I related how all white students given a test by a black colleague and me had fundamentally flunked, being all unable to identify such commodities as hog maws, fried pies and butter roll. The professor-collaborator, a "blood" (black man) and I had been impelled to concoct the test (at the risk of falling victims to the fallacy of <u>reductio ad absurdum</u>) after a ruckus between black students and white administrators at a predominantly white college over the choice of a

professor for a course in "ancient black history." The administrators' choice was a young white fellow, armed with an Ivy League Ph.D. and much lauded publications in "learned journals." The black choice of black students (preferred also by many white students) bore no college credentials but probably knew as much about ancient black history as anybody you ever saw, having recently spent two years haunting the Schomburg Collection in New York. Contrarily, the white professor knew little or nothing about the subject under scrutiny, he was quick to admit, but continued to cry out with strong emotion that he was "qualified." The black students who sought to break up his class could not understand why the administration would present a white man admitting his ignorance to teach a course while rejecting the "qualified black man."

Later, it occurred to me that a black historian seeking publication in learned journals is placed in a rather precarious and unfair position of having to document his work (when writing agressively against the slavery era) with references from the writings and records kept by a slavemaster society in which black persons were restricted by law and custom from the power of the written word.

While a graduate student in sociology at the University of Chicago, I ran afoul of academia's dictates of copious footnoting, fleetingly scanning library shelves for instant references from unread books to win high marks and influence professors with padded documentation. (A Harvard administrator in the audience at Yale assured me that I did not invent that vulgar practice.) Even so, it was for me excusable because, unlike my professors who were unable to tell me the identity of "The Four Tops," I was "culturally deprived." I acquired the Ph.D. without gross dishonor, and that appears

sometimes now to count in the minds of others more than all the good and bad things I have ever done. My contempt grew stronger, in any case, as I discovered the footnoting cliques in references used to buttress white theorizing on the black race. Not only did I detect mutual-quoting affairs; I noted that a professor (as many did) might suggest hypotheses to thesis students who then graciously used some of the professor's work for references, only in turn to be used by the professor to document a larger theory based on the hypotheses of the several students. I learned further while poring over learned journals that the motivation behind the footnoted expressions of gratitude to wealthy foundations and colleagues was not gratitude alone. Nay the fact that a toprate foundation has backed a piece of research gives it the boost of prestige. The scholarly custom of sending a manuscript around to sundry colleagues reaps the insinuation that the colleagues named have given it the stamp of approval. This "dirty knowledge" (as one of my professors called it) gave me, as a faltering black student from a rural district in Oklahoma, a new kind of confidence.

Many experiences, which can turn him either on or off, confront the black college student in the typical white college classroom. For example, he must sit silently bemused while his eminent sociology professor reports, solemnly but proudly that his surveys show that there will be no riots in Chicago because, as one suggested early last September, only 7 per cent of Negroes surveyed say they definitely approve of riots. A black student might not realize that such a professor, like his peers at large, is

suffering from the bias of democracy's myth of majority-rule, but the calculator in his brain might quickly register 70,000 blacks--as he longs for a bourbon on the rocks--and wonders how many Negroes his professor believes sufficient to start a riot. The professor himself may later have stood perplexed when a rioting broke out in Chicago on the heels of Martin Luther King's assassination, but he is not likely to alter his methods or standards of "scholarly excellence" which he requires his black students to digest.

Early in his educational career, the black student encounters the subordinating slap of white supremacy. Modes of communication, for instance, compel him to lose his "in-group dialect" and imitate the snarls and twangs of the white race. "There" becomes "thear;" "hine," "nigh-yun;" "law," "lower;" and so on. Verbal facilty is frankly presented to the black student as the salient ingredient for admission to college, although I know young black men with more verbal facilty than I will ever have who have either flunked out or dropped out of school.

Beyond this, the black student instinctively, if only faintly, is repelled by the fact that foreign languages required are exclusively of white European origin, though oriental languages may be offered as electives. This inspite of the fact that Chinese is spoken by more individuals than any other language in the world and Swahili, an African language, competes very favorably with German. This is just one of the examples of white snobbishness lurking behind the criteria of excellence which, by no means however, is entirely a product of racism alone. Running through its history also is a strain fundamentally of a different sort, though it too is racial, by coincidence, in its consequences.

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Black students who wail about the absence of blackness in white college education accordingly are not trying to destroy American education so much as trying desperately to renovate it to permit their meaningful participation. Their compensatory response to black exclusion has taken a separatist flavor, for the most part, on the surface; but it may seem ironic to those who misunderstand them that, in the name of black nationalism, calling for the presence of more black students and professors, they actually are bringing about more desegregation of white colleges than ever there was before!

The name of the game is the elevation of a people by means of one important escalator--college education. Separatistism and integrationism are possible approaches to that end; they lose their effectiveness when, swayed by dogmatic traces of absolutism, they become full ends in themselves. It will be an irony of recorded history, I have written elsewhere, that "integration" was used in the second half of this century to hold the black race down just as segregation was so instituted in the first half. Black students now seem to feel that integration, particularly in the token way in which it has been practiced up to now, and the neo-tokenist manner now emerging, elevates individual members of the group but paradoxically, in plucking many of the strongest members from the group while failing to alter the lot of the group as a whole, weakens the collective thrust which the group might otherwise muster. Increasingly, black students are turning their backs on the old tendency for Negro college graduates to seek to escape from the black community instead of returning to help build it. This new mood is born of a greater awareness of the glories of their own past as a

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people, an image they now wish to convey also to others. Hence the clamor for more "black courses" and courses taught from a black perspective (or "dark" courses as I overheard one white colleague tell another; later translated by a sociology professor into "color-compatible" courses).

Black studies must be taught from a black perspective. The spirit of blackness must pervade black education. Many white professors--and consequently, of course, professors at Negro colleges--are beginning to dust off old race relations and Negro history courses and call them black. These are collected, usually remaining scattered under the control of existing--frequently racist--departmental chairman. Such programs are not black studies; they are Negro studies or polka dot studies. Nor is the blackening of existing white courses or white-oriented courses alone enough. Black education must be based on both idealogical and pedagogical blackness.

Moreover, black studies may be divided into two basic phases: the expressive and the pragmatic-positivistic. The expressive phase is therapeutic (revitalizing the collective ego via courses in culture and history) while the pragmatic-positivistic stage is utilitarian (providing skills with which to bring about the change desired in one's life circumstances). Even those who recognize the value of black studies in the expressive sense, do not realize that distinction and seek to keep us bogged down in the areas of art and religion and history. We must not become so preoccupied with history that we neglect to act to make our current history and eventual future.

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Afroamerican education must also move into the scientific realm. Many opponents of black studies claim that science is "pure" and that there is no such thing as black science. Even if science is pure--which is debatable, the teaching of science is not. One might choose to focus on atomic weapons of destruction or chemicals for rat extermination relevant to reconstructing the black community. Even mathematics, for example: instead of reading problems referring to stocks and bonds, which we may mistake for mules and cattle, the problem might ask, "If you loot one store and burn two, how many do you have left?" While this example might be improved, it illustrates the kind of content which might whet the enthusiasm of the "ghetto" child.

Black education is black-community centered. At the least, the educational process must involve the black community, transforming the community while educating and training the black student. For example, students in a course in black history--let alone black politics or black economics--might be required to put on panel discussions for younger children in church basements. A course in black education would contain tutorial assignments. A class project for the black history class might be the formation of a black history club; a class in community organization could form civic clubs, while individual students serve apprenticeships under community organizers. Students in black journalism, black economics (business), education courses (teachers), black politics or what not, could do the same.

This would tend to increase the commitment of black students to the community while simultaneously permitting them to "learn to do by doing." At the same time, their mere presence in the community would provide role models not generally available to black youths. Thus education is made

relevant to the student and his community while the community is, so to speak, made relevant to education.

Aside from the matter of intensified motivation (and increased commitment to the struggle to build the black community, students who have mastered even a smattering of black studies courses would be advantaged in their postcollege work in the black community. They would be armed with early involvement and experience in the community superior to professionals not so educated. To develop this key component of community involvement, it is necessary to inspire and sustain a sense of collective destiny as a people and a consciousness of the value of education in a technological society. Skills are needed for success in any endeavor whether it be constructive or destructive. Pragmatism can be either positive or negative, depending on the needs of the black community at a given time and place. A cultural base, cemented by the expressive component of the black studies program and acting as a leverage for other aspects of black ego development and academic unity, would provide the sense of pastness or collective black destiny valuable as a springboard to a new future.

In the effort to make education "relevant" to the black community--and by indirection, to the white community--the communities themselves may be transformed, each in its own way, and, so to speak, made relevant to a bona fide education. Thus black student endeavors not only, if successful, might bring about a kind of black renaissance; they could possibly wield an impact on the entire cemetery of American education.

Hare
AfroAmerican Education

GOALS OF AFROAMERICAN EDUCATION

1. To end white supremacy
2. To decentralize and seize from white hands the power over black education
3. To expose and develop strategies for eradicating racism
4. To prepare black students for self-liberation and self-sufficiency
5. To effect total black freedom of education and the freedom of blackness
6. To create new black structures and institutions in America
7. To create a truly pluralistic society, beginning with a genuinely pluralistic educational system
8. To save and develop black culture
9. To prepare black youths to resist racism and its practices and potential consequences
10. To develop a sense of nationhood among black Americans
11. To regenerate the black ego
12. To eradicate invidious white-invoked distinctions among blacks and particularly between the black bourgeoisie and the black peasant
13. To prepare the black student to contend in a pluralistic society without the loss of his nationalism
14. To promote a black world view
15. To relate to black students and their needs and experiences
16. To serve the black community's interests just as the present system serves white racism
17. To analyze and solve actual problems of concern to black youth and the the black community
18. To create revolutionary black cadres that will teach the people to help exterminate ~~black~~ oppression